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Vista Melts

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International Specialists in the Environment

MEMORANDUM

TO: Paul La Courreys, EPA Region IX Site Screening Coordinator

FROM: Dawn A. Zemo, Ecology and Environment, Inc. *AB*

DATE: September 28, 1988

SUBJECT: Reassessment of Vista Metals, Fontana

EPA ID#: CAD008285033

THROUGH: Tom Carter, Ecology and Environment, Inc. *TZ*

COPY: FIT Master File
Patty Cook, Ecology and Environment, Inc.
Don Plain, California Department of Health Services,
Sacramento
Jim Bennett, Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana
Region, Riverside

INTRODUCTION

Under Technical Directive Document number F9-8709-019, Ecology and Environment, Inc.'s Field Investigation Team (FIT) has been asked to reassess all Preliminary Assessments (PAs) in the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Information System (CERCLIS) with "active" or "pending" status according to guidelines established to implement the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA). The strategy for determination of further action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) is based solely on each site's potential to achieve a score high enough on the Hazard Ranking System (HRS) for inclusion on the National Priorities List (NPL). This strategy is intended to identify those sites posing the highest relative risk to human health or the environment. All other sites needing remedial or enforcement follow-up will be referred to the States or an appropriate Federal agency.

This site was evaluated primarily using the original HRS model. Additionally, this site was also evaluated for its potential to score using the draft revised HRS model. The following is a summary of FIT's findings with regard to this site.

pk/dz/vm/para

recycled paper

SUMMARY

Vista Metals (Vista) operates an aluminum recycling facility located at 13425 Whittram, Fontana, California. The facility has been in operation since 1969. The RCRA database lists Vista as a generator and transporter of hazardous wastes.

On-site operations produce a hazardous waste stream composed of aluminum dross and cooling tower blowdown water. Prior to 1981 the blowdown water was treated with a chromium-zinc additive; sulfuric acid is now used (3). Containment of the aluminum dross is accomplished by storage inside a cement-floored building until it is sold to a reclaimer. Available data indicate that prior to 1978 the blowdown water containing zinc (8.5 mg/l), chromium (5.2 mg/l) and phenol (.028 mg/l) was discharged into an on-site subsurface disposal well at the rate of 3000 gallons per day (9, 10). This practice ceased in 1978 under directive from RWQCB. The total amount of subsurface discharge is unknown; FIT estimates over 7 million gallons were discharged by assuming 9 years of disposal (1969-1978) and 260 workdays per year with 3000 gallons of disposal per day. Currently the spent acid and blowdown water accumulates in a 6-foot deep concrete sump and runs across a concrete yard into a 5000 gallon holding tank. The contents of the tank are pumped out, hauled off-site under permit from Chino Basin Municipal Water District, and legally disposed into the Chino Basin brine line (11).

Available information documents one violation associated with hazardous waste containment or disposal on-site. In November 1977 a RWQCB inspection found an illegal discharge of acidic wastes to the ground (pH=1.0). The estimated volume was 300 gallons per week and the discharge was originating from the chlorinator. The discharge ceased by December 1977 (4). An off-site violation was charged to the Vista facility by RWQCB for the dumping of 1000 pounds of chlorine fume collector sludge at the Fontana Class II landfill in October 1977. Vista removed the sludge on the same day it was dumped and shipped it to Arizona for processing (12).

Wells within 3 miles of the site serve the approximately 50,000 residents of Fontana. The nearest well is located approximately 1.5 miles east of the site and is owned by Fontana Union Water Company. The water from this well is included in the blended municipal domestic water supply system, operated by Fontana Water Company, with 25,863 service connections. Static groundwater level lies approximately 300 feet below the ground surface and the unsaturated zone is composed of a sand and gravel alluvium (1).

There is no naturally-occurring surface water within 3 miles of the site. East Etiwanda Creek, which is a channelized drainage control project, lies 1 mile down-gradient of the site and flows into percolation ponds (6). There are no sensitive environments within 1 mile of the site (7). No observed release to air has been associated with this site and a release is unlikely because of the small amount of waste discharged to the ground (4).

It is unlikely that Vista Metals could qualify for the NPL due to the depth to groundwater, the lack of surface water and low air route potential.

This site might be considered eligible for the NPL under the proposed HRS depth-to-aquifer criteria, especially because of the large quantity of highly toxic waste discharged into the ground and the large groundwater target population.

RECOMMENDATION

1) EPA

Based on the current HRS model, FIT recommends that no further remedial action be planned at the Vista Metals facility for the following reasons:

- o three-hundred foot depth to groundwater;
- o no potential surface water targets; and
- o no observed release to air.

2) State or Other Agency

Copies of this reassessment will be sent to DOHS and RWQCB, Santa Ana Region, for their consideration.

EPA CONCURRENCE

No Further Action

High Priority SSI

Medium Priority SSI

Initial

Date

pal

10.29.88
